Faerie Madness

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/24073156.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham/Molly Foster
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Molly Foster, Bedelia Du Maurier, Alana Bloom, Jack Crawford, Dr. Frederick Chilton
Additional Tags:	Faeries & Fae, Alternate Universe - Supernatural Elements, Trans Character, PTSD, Abuse, Trauma, a little bit OOC at the beginning but that's the trauma, Bigotry, Amnesia, Memory Loss, Magic, Implied/Referenced Torture, chapter warnings at the beginning, its really not as gloomy as it sounds
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-05-08 Updated: 2020-06-09 Words: 11,357 Chapters: 3/?

Faerie Madness

by We_re_in_bloody_hell

Summary

When his ex-fiancé Hannibal Lecter, traitor to the Order of Walkers and Watchers and Public Enemy n#1, was declared dead in the Land of Faerie, Will thought that was the end of it. No one would ever discover Hannibal's secrets, remember him fondly, or — god forbid — try to revive his memory. He was free to move on with his life and forget the past.
Five years later, the past gets tired of being ignored and sends to his door a victim of the worst case of Faerie Madness he has ever seen — a twenty five year old Hannibal Lecter, apparently fresh from Hell and with no memory of his rejuvenating trip.
Yet — is it really Hannibal? What happened to him? And does he really not remember the terrible secret that lead to his banishment ?

Notes

I already have a part of this written out and will TRY to update regularly. English is my 4th language so there might be mistakes. This is also a rewrite of an original work of mine, which is responsible for some of the OOC-ness in the first (few) chapters. Enjoy.

See the end of the work for more notes

Hannibal Lecter

"—This is how we found him."

"What do you mean, this is how you found him ?"

A third, oily voice joined the conversation.

"I believe," it said, "that what Lady Chancellor means is that this is precisely the state in which Mr— is it Mr ? — Lecter was found by our Watchers."

"What ? Rolled in fœtal position surrounded by broken glass ?"

"No — well, that too, I suppose."

Two things rang in the air. The first was a clinking against the bars of the cell, causing Hannibal to flinch. The second was the Chancellor's voice, more welcomed :

"Dr Lecter, raise your head a moment, please."

He obeyed. He even opened his eyes as a show of respect, despite the searing torch light and against all common sense.

You really ought to know better by now, hissed the vicious little voice in his head. He ignored it. It was just... PTSD. His brain cracking apart at the seams after being picked at for so long. A faerie ghost in his head. Not real. It would fade like any bad dream.

"Oberon!" Cursed someone. Hannibal flinched again, a string of "nononononono" escaping his lips before he could close them. *Not Oberon, no, don't say his name!*

"It seems the mentioning of faerie names causes him distress," commented the Vice-Chancellor, a thin and squirrelly man Hannibal only recognised by the blue cap he was wearing. The Chancellor, a tall woman whose traditional golden robes complimented her pale skin and blonde hair, rolled her eyes, causing Hannibal’s lips to twist into a sort of smile. He liked her, despite not recognising her. How long was he gone ?

"Yeah, no shit," said the man in the middle, in a painfully familiar way. Hannibal's broken, shattered eyes flitted over him. His hair was curly and brown, he seemed in his late twenties and —

Faerie!

For a second, all familiarity evaporated, and Hannibal clamped his jaws shut on the squeal of terror that wanted to escape his throat and go tearing through the air, damning and weak. His muscles froze into place as if he was nothing more than a small animal caught in the stare of his predator, and his breath stalled in his lungs. The creature might be alone, but it was dangerous enough. And old habits, however pathetic, died hard.

"Look at his eyes," it said. "Look at his hands, his hair! He's clearly been infected by the Fae at least three years ago!"

As Hannibal bared his teeth and growled, his higher brain functions seemed to wake from their momentary slumber.

He knew this man.

Knew him very well, in fact, probably better than anyone in the Seven Worlds. He'd simply never seen his face, his eyes, without a glamour before.

His snarl faltered, and he pushed to his feet, jumping over the glass shards and crossing the cell in the blink of an eye to grab at the bars and pull up close. The Chancellor and her Vice Chancellor recoiled with twin cries of surprise, but the half-Fae in front of him didn't budge.

"William?"

0o0o0o0o0

The first time Will met Hannibal, his name was Hanna and she, at the time, was easily the person he had dreaded meeting the most in all his thirteen years of life.

The half-Fae was eating in the mess hall of Walker Academy, head hung low and hat tugged down over his hair, ears and brows as far as it would go, when Hanna Lecter, last survivor of the ancestral Lecter family and local prodigy, plopped down on the bench in front of him, swiping short brown hair out of marron eyes with what amounted, for her, to an ecstatic grin.

Immediately, Will felt the attention of the entire mess hall converging on his table, conversations stalling for a second to appraise his probably-soon-to-be-broken flushed face and upcoming debilitating humiliation and head trauma.

Honestly, everyone had placed bets on when Hanna Lecter would destroy the half-Fae bastard who thought he had his place at the Academy. Even Will had, if only to pretend he wasn't scared.

"Will Graham, isn’t it ?"

Will nodded tersely.

"You're Hanna Lecter."

Hanna’s features were firmly schooled in a pleasant, open expression, but he got the distinct impression she grimaced without moving a muscle at the mention of her name.

"Please, just call me Han for now."

Will nodded again, nervously. He wiped his sweaty palms on the legs of his uniform pants and put on his bravest face as he looked around the room. People didn't even have the decency to hide their stare, or to look away for a second as he swiped his gaze all around him, encompassing all the round tables around the high-roofed, church-looking mess hall. He

always chose the smallest table, back to the wall so he was leaving his back open to no one. Unfortunately that also meant he and his heavy book bag were trapped in the corner until Hanna decided to move.

"... Han. What can I do for you ?"

Han cocked her head boyishly.

That was really the only way Will thought of to describe her movements. Boyish. Not aimed at pleasing the gaze, or seeming elegant, just controlled yet carefree like a boy.

(Will came from a very small conservative village. He felt it acutely. Normal people did not judge someone's boyishness on their movements.)

"You could invest in a more suitable hat, to start. And not trying to hide your entire being under it would also probably help."

"What for? So people could gawk more freely at the freak?"

Han raised an eyebrow, then made a show of looking around the room, turning fully in her seat. People suddenly began to find the food extremely interesting, as if they'd never seen peas and chicken in their whole life. Will relaxed a little bit and threw caution out the window. It gave him a wounded glare as it fell into the pit of bad decisions.

"What do you want, Lecter?" He snapped rudely, then startled as Han clapped her hands once.

"There it is!" She grinned. "I was given to understand that you had a lot more bite than you were displaying. Fire suits you immensely better than your halfhearted show of submission did.“

Will narrowed his eyes.

"If you want to scare me away from the Academy, you should know that—"

“Now, William, why ever would I want that? In barely five sentences you have managed to be infinitely more interesting than most people at this Academy. Your absence from it would be a terrible loss.”

Will stared. Distantly, he heard a girl off to the side choke on her drink and splutter.

"I don't know? You're one of the Academy's most popular students, and I'm..." he gestured vaguely to, well, his entire being, hat included.

Han smiled even wider, if that was possible, and pointed a finger at his face. She had a very peculiar smile, like she knew something no one else did and was laughing at all of them for it, under a glaze of friendliness. If Will hadn’t been, well, what he is, he would never have caught the subtlety in it.

“Precisely. Everyone has come to be to beg for scraps of attention or figuratively rub my back, except you. You just try your best to fade into the mass. I would like to be your friend.”

Will stared. Again. Obviously something was wrong there. Some joke on him, without a doubt. Hanna Lecter of all people should not want to be his friend, never in a million years. Was she sincere?”

"Aren't you afraid that people will... stop talking to you?" He asked cautiously. Hanna's eyebrows flew up her face.

"Because of your heritage? Do you believe that such frightful, petty children would be in any way worth my time, Will?”

Will opened his mouth, then hesitated, looking left and right as if someone might be coming up to punch him. Hanna just looked at him expectantly. She was tall, almost taller than him, with an air of nobility and command that only added to that impression. She had a sort of boyish beauty (ugh, that word again) about her, and in truth, if Will had not known of her, he probably would have mistaken her for a boy. A very attractive boy, in fact. Her shoulders were wide, her arms muscular under all the warm winter clothes, and she always sat or stood ram-rod straight and tall, like a queen upon her throne. Looking her in the eye was a challenge that she always seemed to win.

Will felt like her complete opposite, slouching, hiding his ears and delicate facial features, avoiding eye contact when he wasn’t glaring and stuttering when adults addressed him.

"My kind killed your family," he dropped after a moment, much like a bomb silencing everyone in his immediate vicinity. The stares returned. Now was the moment of truth.

Han looked at him squarely and replied :

"Do you consider them your kind? Or do they?" She indicated the other students with a toss of her hand, not adverting her gaze for a second. Will blinked.

"My father is a Walker," he retorted. "By any law, that makes me one, too."

Han smiled faintly again and spread her hands.

“There you have it. and even were you a full-fledged Fae, that would hardly warrant any kind of violent action on my part. Blaming an entire race for the actions of a few would be childish and ridiculous.”

"One might say it's being cautious."

"Being racist, rather."

"If anyone is justified in that, it's you."

"Nothing justifies hatred, William."

But disdain, yes. You don’t really respect anyone here, do you Lecter?

Before the halfling could formulate an answer, she added :

"Why did you come to the Academy?"

Will bristled.

"Should I not have?"

"I was under the impression that we had moved past that part of the conversation," retorted Han with an eyebrow raise. "You do not seem happy to be here as one might expect of you, you are not attempting to make friends... why are you here?"

"Every Walker goes through the Academy," said Will through gritted teeth.

"Wrong," said Han nonchalantly. "Not every Walker. Only those with a very specific goal in mind. The rest go to Walker School."

"What about you ?" Challenged Will. "What's your special goal?"

Hannibal's face lit up like a Will'o'the Wisp on the Faerie border. It seemed almost forced to Will’s too-keen eyes, but ultimately genuine.

"I want to study Walking," she said. "Not only doing it, but how we do it, why we do it, how we can improve it. Magic is also an interest of mine — Faerie magic, to be exact. I believe that by allying human and faerie magic, we can reach something much higher and greater that could bring us knowledge and peace. The medical field, for example, could benefit from this kind of knowledge."

Will stared.

"I expected something more..."

"Hateful?"

"Revenge-orientated," he corrected. Han shrugged.

“The only revenge worth having would be on the surviving attackers, and they have not emerged from Faerie in a long time. In time, perhaps, I will feel compelled to hunt them down and make them suffer for my family. But as of yet, I must concentrate on my studies.” She paused. "You did not answer my question."

Will looked away.

"It's childish," he said. "I want to prove to everyone that I can be as good of a Walker as them. I want to remind them I exist, that they can't just erase me. And I wanna work in teaching, later. Something with kids, perhaps."

"You are going at it wrong," said Han immediately.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You are going at it wrong," she repeated, meeting his eyes once more. "Not about the teaching thing, that sounds like an admirable plan. But you shouldn't be aiming at being a great Walker. Anyone can be a great Walker with a lick of luck. You should be aiming at being the best Walker. The first in everything. Make it impossible for people to ignore or dismiss you. And that starts—" she reached across the table and tugged off his beanie, revealing the fluffy brown hair and pointed Fae ears underneath "— with taking this off and standing straight." She let the beanie fall to the table like it was somehow offending her very sensibilities by its continued existence and looked at him.

Stunned, Will barely even registered the people staring overtly at them, at his eyes, at his ears, stuttering :

"B-but I can't be a better Walker than you!"

"Was it Oscar Wilde who said "always aim for the Moon, if you miss, you'll fall among the stars" or something similar?"

Will looked around the mess hall desperately. The girl that had choked on her drink seemed to have forgotten how to close her mouth, gesturing helplessly at her friend, who was calmly eating a yoghurt. Two tables behind her, one of the heads of the fighting club met his gaze and raised an eyebrow at him. Three tables over, Alana Bloom, Head Girl of the Academy, wasn't even looking at him, but dragged her friend's stare back to her and sent him a compassionate glance. On his left, the knuckleheads of his fighting class seemed disappointed. No one told him how to react to that.

Hanna clapped her hands together.

"Well, you look much better now. There is still a little bit of work to make on your posture, but we will come to that. Come, walk with me to fighting class."

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When Will saw Hannibal again, fifteen years later and more than five years after his disappearance, he could hardly believe his eyes.

His hair had turned dark gray — no, dark silver, glinting like metal under the torchlight. He was thin, dirty, his skin bleached of any colour, and curled in on himself as if trying to disappear from sight. His clothes were thorn and so dirty and old that their colour could not be discerned, he had thin, stark white scars all over his hands and arms, and his eyes...

His eyes looked like broken glass. Quite literally, they looked as if they had been replaced by two cracked glass orbs, barely holding together in his sockets.

Faerie Madness. Of the most advanced type.

But, most of all, what shocked Will was that his old friend still looked twenty-five.

Because of that, when Hannibal threw himself at the bars of the cell, gasping out "William!", the half-Fae did not flinch back like the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor.

He knew twenty-five-years-old Hannibal. Probably better than anyone else in the Seven Worlds.

(Twenty-five years old Hannibal was probably the last Hannibal he had known that well.) Hannibal's broken-glass eyes searched his face, squinting and blinking as if the febble light hurt them.

"Are you... real?" He asked, voice rough and breaking on the last word. He reached with a shaky, bloody hand through the bars, as if to touch Will's face.

Will did not know what might have happened had that hand touched his face, traced his cheekbone with reverence as it had so often done, so long ago. He did not know how he might have reacted had Hannibal's eyes not caught sight of his own hand.

The reaching fingers stalled mere centimetres from the half-Fae's cheek, and Hannibal closed his eyes a second. Then he opened them again, still looking at his hand, and slowly closed it, almost as an afterthought, like something that had just occurred to him for the first time.

His hand fell back limply at his side, and Hannibal hung his head, listing forward to press his forehead against the cool metal holding him prisoner. His other hand released its death grip on the bar, sliding down with the slickness of the blood.

"You seem older," he muttered, staring at the ground. "I hadn’t seen it — I was distracted by the eyes, but... how long was I gone?"

Will's voice returned at least, but with it went his calm.

"You disappeared five years ago. Did you try to hide in Faerie?"

Hannibal raised his head a little, but his gaze did not rise to Will’s face, staring instead at his chest with a blank, faraway look that made the half-Fae want to shake him like a bottle of soda to see if any answers exploded out.

"Did you think you would be safe with your new knowledge, you traitor?" He reached through the bars and grabbed at his ex-boyfriend's face, forcing him to raise his chin. With a hiccup, Hannibal's hand came to grab at his wrist, and Will grabbed the other arm, feeling the fragile bones shift and grind together under his grip. The twenty-five-year-old closed his eyes with a scream like a wounded animal and went limp, but Will barely noticed, shaking him like a ragdoll.

"You thought you could hide, DIDN'T YOU! YOU THOUGHT NO ONE WOULD MAKE YOU PAY—"

A hand closed on the back of his coat and a firm grip made him release the other Walker, who crumpled to the floor like a useless puppet and started frantically scooting backwards, eyes wide and terrified, but mouth clamped shut and breathing forcibly under control.

"Mr Graham!" Snapped the Chancellor. "Control yourself!"

Will stumbled back, out of breath from rage, and raked his hand through his curly hair to calm himself, get himself under control. The Chancellor was glaring at him, drawn to her full height, with the expression that put the fear of god into her opponents.

"Mr Graham," she said with a steely calm. "If you cannot get your emotions under control, you will no longer be a part of this mission, and our Watchers will block all memory of Dr Lecter's return from your brain. Is that clear?"

There was a moment of silence in which Will simply tried to gather his thoughts. He was here on secret business. Secret business involving his ex-boyfriend, who had somehow resurfaced five years after being declared dead, looking seven years younger than he actually was and struck by one of the most advanced types of Faerie Madness the half-Fae had ever seen.

Will nodded once. The Chancellor looked at him a moment longer, then turned to her Vice-Chancellor, who was looking rather ostensibly bored by the whole business. He knocked on the bars, and Hannibal flinched. His eyes were closed again and he was sat on the ground against the far wall, head hung low once again.

"Mr Lecter, tell us what you remember of the past seven years, if you please," said the Vice Chancellor in a monotone.

A strained chuckle leapt from Hannibal's throat, and he threw his head back, cracking it against the wall. A twisted, haunting version of his old smile stretched on his face, and he slit open his eyes just enough for them to shine like a cat's in the light of the industrial torches.

"Nothing," he rasped our like it was painful. "I can't remember anything from the past seven years."

"I don't believe you," declared Will, stalking close to the iron bars but careful not to touch them. He might only be half-Fae, but that didn't mean he had any fondness for cold iron.

Hannibal looked at him, his expression so familiar that Will almost felt twenty again.

"I don't care," he retorted. "To take one of your own expressions, I don't give a flying fuck whether you believe me or not."

A beat or two passed as they looked in each other's eyes, broken glass against what Will now understood was being seen for what it was, sans glamour : solid blue orbs and dancing silver stars.

In these moments, Hannibal looked perfectly sane, almost normal, as he would always look after asking Will one of his challenging psychological questions: *why does your empathy make you so afraid of yourself? Are you trying to be the best, or pretending at trying? What if we could Walk through all Seven Worlds and Beyond? What would you do—*

Then the Chancellor spoke again, and the illusion shattered. Hannibal closed his eyes once more. Will stepped back from the bars. They breathed, in and out, as one, like they'd learned all those years ago.

"Do you remember how you escaped?" Asked the Chancellor.

"I Walked," answered Hannibal without opening his eyes, without hesitation, as if that much was obvious.

"You lost the ability to Walk six years ago," said Will.

"I can't remember," repeated Hannibal. "It might as well not have happened, because I can't remember."

Will opened his mouth to... he didn't know what for. The Chancellor badgered on anyways, and he closed it, stepping back once again.

"Dr Lecter," she said. "We have alarms throughout the whole Pure Land that would warn us immediately if you set foot into it. We have an entire division of Watchers dedicated to finding you. None of the alarms rang, and none of the Watchers noticed anything until you appeared at the edge of Lake District. You did not Walk. Now, I ask again: how did you escape?"

Hannibal opened his eyes again, slowly. Then, methodically, unhurriedly, he got to his feet — they were bare and dirty — and walked to the bars, stopping right in front of the Chancellor, keeping his eyes, his broken-glass eyes, on her the whole time, with that soul-piercing stare of his —

What would you do with the power to—

A wide, lazy and toothy grin spread on his face as he stepped against the bars, still staring at the Chancellor. To her credit, she did not back down. The Vice Chancellor did. Will wanted to. But she stood her ground and matched Hannibal's stare as he said:

"Who said it was the Pure Land I Walked through?”

Monster

Chapter Summary

Even having as good a day as his brain permitted it, Hannibal certainly wasn’t in full possession of his memories and knowledge, but he was certain one Faerie Madness-addled man should not reasonably have warranted that many visitors. Especially since his existence was supposed to be a secret.

Hannibal gets the worst torture of all - social interaction

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone who took the time to read the first chapters! as for those who gave kudos and comments, I unfortunately only have one firstborn to give as thanks, so i hope you're ready for some shared parenting.

Here's the second chapter, a bit earlier than planned.
Chapter warnings for a sort of nebulous panic attack and implied torture

Molly got home late. She had a full-time job at the Watcher Academy, a position as teacher of Arcane Runes. Students often held her up talking about something or other, so her being late for dinner with her fiancé wasn't particularly uncommon or even noteworthy.

What was both of these things was finding her fiancé Will slumped at the dining room table, head in his hands and elbows on the tabletop like manners were a foreign thing unworthy of his attention.

The Watcher set her bookbag down in the hallway and stepped around the table to come behind him, running her fingers along the tabletop, up his arm, through his hair, to settle on his shoulders were she began lightly kneading the knotted muscles.

He never sat with his back to the door. If he did, she would have noticed earlier that he was wearing his official Walker robes, the ones every Walker had to wear when meeting the Chancellor, dark red with a black collar where her own Watcher robes would be dark green with a white collar. Much more elegant, in her humble opinion.

"You talked to the Chancellor?" Molly asked softly. Will nodded without raising his head. "What did she have to say?"

He sighed as she began kneading his shoulders in earnest. That was a them thing, what they did whenever one of them had had a long day: start massaging them and gently try to get them to open up. And then, a warm bubble bath in one of the gigantic bathtubs of Lecter manor, where they lived together.

Will raised his head, rubbing a hand on his face, and met her gaze in the mirror opposing them. His piercing blue eyes were rimmed with red and... Molly searched for an appropriate word. Hollow. Shattered. He looked gutted.

"She wanted to give me a mission," he said. His voice had a weird toneless quality to it, almost as if it had no echo. That only ever happened when he was truly upset.

Molly bent down to kiss him fleetingly on the lips, then on the cheek, starting to massage his shoulders more earnestly. He relaxed a tiny bit and closed his eyes. She counted that as a victory.

"What mission?"

"Hannibal Lecter was found."

Molly's fingers stalled. Blood roared in her ears. *Hannibal Lecter*.

Will kept going:

"Three days ago, the flux captors went crazy all over the world before concentrating in one place."

"England," said Molly. She was astonished at the steadiness of her own voice. "I remember. It disrupted my runework and I almost ended up creating a fluxpoint denser than my students. Like a black hole."

Will's lips twitched up, but he kept going like he was telling her about his mother's death:

"It concentrated somewhere in Lake District, actually. Right outside Faerie territory. When the Anomally team got there they found a man, half-conscious, laying on the floor. They took him into custody without any form of resistance on his part. Apparently, according to the head of the squad, he started weeping for joy when he realised they were Walkers."

Molly frowned.

"Why would Lecter accept being taken into custody by Walkers? He's lucky they didn't execute him on sight!"

"I'm not done, love," said Will gently, laying his hand on hers. He took a deep breath and went on: "upon analysis, it appeared that the man was *biologically* a man, and that he was somewhere around twenty-five years old."

"So it... *wasn't* Lecter?"

"His eyeprints match. His — his goddamn aura matches. He said, himself, that he was Hannibal Lecter. But he claims not to remember anything from the past seven years."

Molly pulled a chair and sat down, turning to her husband and meeting his eyes squarely. She wasn't really one for face-to-face, intense confrontations, but it always seemed to work well with Will. He seemed to be able to hold her gaze indefinitely, when he would meet it at all.

"You don't believe him."

Will shook his head.

"I don't and I told him."

"You saw him?"

"I did. He — his hair hasn't been cut in a while and it's kind of — metallic? He looks twenty-five and he has maybe the most advanced case of Faerie Madness I've ever encountered, but he — he's lucid. More or less. I told him I didn't believe him and he said he didn't care. He also said..." Will trailed off, eyes downcast. Molly waited for him to gather his thoughts.

"He said he had Walked, Molly," he mused finally.

"He can't Walk anymore. You told me yourself, and there's official record of the incident."

Will let out a brittle, almost hysterical laugh.

"Well, I guess you can tell him that when they bring him here next week."

"I beg your pardon?"

Molly was almost sure she'd misunderstood. Hannibal Lecter was coming here? *Why?*

A bitter smile rugged at Will's mouth, and he shook his head with — disgust? Shame? Resignation?

"That's the mission," he declared. "I have to babysit Hannibal fucking Lecter inside this fortress of a house until something can be done about him."

"Why you?"

Will avoided her eyes.

"You know why, Mol."

Molly couldn't tell if that meant "Because I was engaged to him", "because I live in his family house", “because they still suspect me”, or "because I'm half Fae". She supposed it didn't matter. There might not even be a difference between the last two. Hannibal Lecter was going to be living with them.

"You can leave," said Will softly. He was still not meeting her eyes. "It might be dangerous."

Molly stared at him like he'd grown a second head.

"That is precisely the reason why I'm not leaving you alone to live with Hannibal Lecter of all people." Will tensed up and she continued: "Do you need me to remind you how many people he has killed?"

"Hannibal wouldn't kill me," retorted Will immediately. She stared at him disbelievingly as he added quickly, still not meeting her eyes: "he had way too many opportunities to do so in the past, he wouldn't do it now."

"Will," Molly enunciated slowly. "He has Faerie Madness. Even if he doesn't want to kill you, it's too dangerous to leave him with you. Plus," she added as an afterthought, "I'll need to be here to tune the wards to him. And check them daily. And—"

"You can't tell him your name," said Will quickly. She frowned at him, and he went on: "I know Hannibal. He may have been tortured by the Fae for Oberon knows how long, but I'll be damned if he didn't at least master the art of Names. Most victims of Faerie Madness soak up some of it during their stay. And, in case he remembers..."

"I won't tell him my real name, love," assured Molly. "Stop worrying. Anything else?"

Will looked at her straight in the eyes and answered:

"He's charming."

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"Charming" was one way to put it. Molly had never met someone so effortlessly charismatic as Hannibal Lecter, back when he was still the Walkers' Golden Boy, invited to all the events and cherished and scorned in equal parts by all. She'd only seen him briefly, a quick conversation at a dinner back when she was sixteen and he twenty and he'd just finished transitioning, but in those two hours she'd nearly fallen in love with his witty one-liners and perfect manners... as had everyone else, too. No matter the gossip and scorn spouted behind Hannibal's back, as soon as he entered a room it all melted like a snowball in hell.

She had also met Will at that dinner. Lecter had, for a few years at this point, taken the habit of bringing him along everywhere he was invited despite the shock it produced, or maybe because of the shock it produced.

And while Hannibal's clever way with words and philosophical debates had made him the star of the evening and drawn every eye, Will's quiet pride and intelligent, if somewhat

scathing at times, conversation had caught Molly's eye and heart more surely and more lastingly than Hannibal's flame.

So, yes. Hannibal Lecter was charming. So was Molly. And she sure wasn't about to let that distract her from what he'd done to the Order and what he could have done to the world.

Hannibal Lecter was dangerous, and damned if she wouldn't protect her fiancé and her Community from him as best she could.

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Even having as good a day as his brain permitted it, Hannibal certainly wasn't in full possession of his memories and knowledge, but he was certain one Faerie Madness-addled man should not reasonably have warranted that many visitors. Especially since his existence was supposed to be a secret.

It had started with the Vice Chancellor, as squirrelly and oily — pompous — as the day before. He strutted into the room sometime in the morning (or at least Hannibal assumed it was still morning), his arrival heralded with fanfare by no less than three orderlies at regular intervals since he had woken up.

The first two had stayed well clear of the bars, as if he were some kind of dangerous, bloodthirsty animal who would pounce on them and rip their severely lacking backbone out, holding their tasers and sticks protectively before them as they threatened him with bodily harm and a cut in meals should he step a single centimetre closer to the bars than absolutely necessary during the Vice-Chancellor's visit. The third, however, a black man by the name of Barney who was built in a fashion fascinatingly close to the shape of a tank, had stood right in front of the bars, and given his announcement in a loud but unaggressive voice, before courteously starting a conversation with Hannibal that had come pleasingly close to being normal and engaging.

From him, Hannibal had learned the date, the time, the name of the Chancellor (Bedelia du Maurier) and that of the vice-Chancellor (Frederick Chilton).

He was also left with many, many questions unasked. Namely, how in the Seven Hells had a bumbling fool like Chilton become Vice-Chancellor? Wasn't Bedelia du Maurier a psychiatrist? He definitely remembered working with her on his first published article at seventeen. What had become of the old Chancellor, Verger? The man had been a horrible bigot obsessed with profit, and Hannibal wasn't sad to see him go in the least, but it was puzzling.

Even more so was the way Barney had apologetically declined answering any questions about Will. His fiancé, his little mongoose, who had been so angry at him yesterday, for reasons he did not quite understand. Who was older than him now. Hannibal missed him like he missed fresh air, missed his smile and sparkling eyes, the way he tucked his chin in a little when somebody complimented him, missed his prickliness, his love of dogs, missed the feeling of his lips and the smell of his skin.

The Will he had seen yesterday did not seem like he smiled often anymore. His eyes did not appear as they used to to Hannibal. His smell had changed, overpowered by an atrocious aftershave that had no business sullying his pure scent.

The Will he had seen yesterday wore a ring that wasn't Hannibal's on his finger, that had left a bruised imprint on his skin when he had grabbed him.

Hannibal was still busy ruminating on that piece of information when the pompous imbecile himself, Barely-Deserving-The-Title-Of-Doctor Chilton, strutted into his field of vision and primly sat on the chair that Barney had installed. He regarded Hannibal with a supremely satisfied smirk, saying nothing for a while.

Hannibal closed his eyes from the sliver he had been maintaining them at, hoping his sensitivity to light would fade with time. It hadn't, and all he got for his trouble was a vicious headache. And the vision of a smug Chilton. He had grown an unfortunate beard since the last time Hannibal recalled seeing him, one which only served to highlight his lack of chin.

There was a rustle of cloth as Frederick shifted.

"Well, well. If someone had told me last month that I would shortly have the infamous Hannibal Lecter in my custody, I would have asked security to carry the delusional individual into a cell of his own."

Hannibal mulled over his options for a response. Perhaps it would be best to investigate what dimensional wrap had put Chilton into this position.

Frederick continued his no doubt rehearsed little speech:

"We each have our role in this universe: Walkers walk the Pure Land to carry messages to and from the spirits, explore the Pure Land to its uncharted confines in hope to find the answer to our existence, and protect us from the Others with weapons and soldiers. Watchers monitor them, interpret the messages, and keep the balance of the universe by containing each Land to its realm. But you — you decided —"

"The last time I recall seeing you Frederick, you were just beginning to understand that surgery was not the career you should have tried engaging in. Am I to understand you shifted your interest to politics?" Hannibal interrupted the simplistic and idealising speech before it could aggravate his nagging headache and grant him the kind of information that was best left untouched. If there was one thing Frederick did not know how to do, it was keep crucial information to himself.

Hannibal couldn't remember what the slimy man spoke of.

“And psychiatry. The two go surprisingly well together, especially in a small Community such as ours. I did have remarkable luck with it, but alas I feel all the credit for my current position goes to you.”

Eyes still shut, Hannibal raised an eyebrow, and quietly despaired for Chilton’s patients.

“For human society, a psychiatrist, even one who coined you for what you were before you revealed yourself, is still simply a psychiatrist. But for Walkers and Watchers, my my...” Frederick purred, all but dripping in satisfaction. “After Verger and his associates were... removed, the best options to keep our community safe from harm were those who knew our biggest threat better than he knew himself... namely, Dr. Du Maurier and myself.”

“How convenient for you, this sudden *removal* of the government in place. Trying your hand at coups, Frederick?”

There was a silence, during which Hannibal rapidly organised the information he had been given in the parts of his mind palace that were still accessible to him, best defended and sturdy.

Chilton and Bedelia control the Community thanks to me. I am considered “the biggest threat”. I might have killed the previous Chancellor and his government. Frederick did not get more bearable with age.

“Nice try at subversion, Hannibal. A little heavy-handed, perhaps, but I will chalk that up to your current... situation. However,” there was another rustle of cloth, then footsteps on stone floor, and Hannibal pictured Chilton trying his best to loom at him on the other side of the bars, “you would do well to dispel any foolish notions of having deceived us with your simpering tale of amnesia. You will not escape justice, no matter what you try. Even Will Graham isn’t on your side this time.”

Hannibal finally opened his eyes a crack.

“No,” he conceded. “Will Graham isn’t. But perhaps luck is, if you are to be my greatest opponent.”

Frederick turned his nose up with a viciously smug little grin, and strutted away, calling over his shoulder:

“Whatever you say, Hanna, whatever you say.”

Hannibal closed his eyes again as the footsteps faded, calmly considering his chances at making Chilton’s death look like an accident. Then he told himself that, to be considered “the biggest threat” to the Community, he may have done much worse than a little murder.

The thought was not reassuring.

The second visitor arrived barely five minutes into Hannibal’s efforts not to think about the implications of what Frederick had said, slow, slightly irregular steps echoing up and down the drafty hall. He did not open his eyes this time.

The visitor — surely a woman by the sound of her heels — came to a slow halt in front of his cell. For a while, all was silent, and Hannibal tentatively strained himself to smell out the visitor. He could feel his lucidity slipping from his grasp like blood from an open wound — fast at first, then slower as the supply dwindles.

Still, Hannibal liked to think that his 'partially mad' was a good deal saner than some people's 'entirely sane'.

This is where you would think of Will, mocked the voice in his head — faint, sounding almost like his own at this point. *If you weren't such a coward*.

I cannot remember. I cannot remember, thought Hannibal with a touch of hysteria perceived even by him. The voice made an amused sound, the haughty, dignified cousin of a snort.

"Looks like Frederick was right, for once," declared a smooth, steely female voice. He tamped down on his urge to startle, having forgotten his visitor, but couldn't prevent a minute twitch as she continued. "I would not have recognised the person in front of me as Count Hannibal Lecter VIII if I hadn't been warned."

The voice sounded only faintly familiar, stained with distaste as it was, but Hannibal counted that familiarity as a victory: he hadn't recognised Bedelia and Frederick before having been told their names, even face to face with them as he had been.

He opened his eyes a crack, wincing a little at the way the light reflects off the white suit of the woman standing stock-still in front of the bars. A cursory glance didn't awaken any memories at first, but he tried to concentrate on her facial features rather than the obvious desire she had to scoop his eyes out with a spoon.

The name escaped him in what would have been a startled gasp had he not been an expert at maintaining an even tone.

"Alana."

She inclined her head slightly, still examining him like a half crushed insect she debated putting out of its misery. Her hair was shorter than he remembered, her posture ever so slightly stilted, her eyes cold and unfriendly like he's never seen them be. He let his eyes slip closed again.

"Hannibal."

"You look well, Alana."

"You don't. It's supremely satisfying, I must admit."

Seeing bad things happen to bad people makes good people like Alana feel good, hissed the voice in his head, losing its veneer of humanity like a snake slowly shedding its old skin. This skin, he knew, was more akin to a loved suit, slipped into and out of as the situation demands.

"I assume so," he offered lightly. "Everyone seems to be of that mind, lately."

The silence stretched on. He let it, for a time. Silence was often preferable to the alternative.

His tongue, however, seemed to have a mind of its own.

“Did you come here simply to... gawk at the freak, or is there something I can help you with?”

“I came here to tell you that Will has accepted to guard you until further notice,” Alana answered evenly, “and to demonstrate how alive I still am.”

Hannibal couldn’t remember what she was referring to with that statement, but he was sure that remembering would make him want to scream until his throat is raw, and he had had quite enough of that to last him a lifetime. He instead directed his attention to the first half of her statement.

“I am not to remain overlong in Frederick’s tender care, then,” he said — almost tremulously. Wherever Will was, he wouldn’t be kept in a cell. He wouldn’t be prodded and poked at to see what made him react the loudest, or forced to ingurgitate food and drink that would leave him reeling and clawing away at his mind in a desperate attempt to escape its horrors. Will wouldn’t let that happen to him, no matter what he’d done, he wouldn’t, because Will was *good* and *just* and didn’t laugh at pain.

He might laugh at yours —

Hannibal cracked his head back against the wall, curling his fingers into his palm and barely refraining from tugging at his hair as if he could tug the voice out of his cranium the same way.

The chair made a small screeching sound as Alana startled — she must have sat down into it while he was thanking his lucky star.

Her voice took a note of tentativeness, barely discernible — a far shot from the open book she used to be to him, but readable nonetheless if one squinted hard.

“I thought that would make you happy.”

“It does,” he assured her, disgusted at how shaky his voice was starting to be. “It does, very much. Thank you, Alana.”

“Don’t thank me,” she retorted, voice sharp once more. “If it were up to me, you would never see Will again, much less the light of day.” The chair screeched again as she stood from it and stepped closer to the bars. “I came to tell you that so you would know: this isn’t the Will you left behind. He has seen you, monster that you are, and he will not be so easily manipulated. If anything, anything, happens to him, you will suffer immediate and exacting consequences. I haven’t quite fallen so far as to militate for —“

“I would never hurt Will,” Hannibal cut her off rudely. His blood froze at even the thought of being responsible of such an act. “And he has never been weak or easily manipulated. Thank you for your trouble.” And he shoved his fingers into his ears to block out anything she might

have to say further. He wasn't yet desperate and inhibited enough to hum loudly with the action , but it was a near thing.

He didn't want to hear anymore from her. This wasn't his Alana. His Alana was nice and warm, a ray of sunshine he could summon from his thoughts when his longing for Will became too sharp to even think about him. His Alana had even been nice to *monsters* like him.

Monster. Monster. Monster.

Two syllabes, like the beat of his heart in his chest.

Mon-ster. Ba-dum. Mon-ster. Ba-dum. Mon-ster.

He very carefully did not try to analyse his emotions, the thoughts he might have that made the word feel like shards of ice in his chest.

Mon-ster. Mon-ster. Mon-ster. Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum.

Let's do some breathing exercises, coaxed his image of Will, his beautiful, happy Will, the only welcome voice in his head. *like before. In for five, hold for seven, out of eight.*

At this point, obeying the hallucination was instinct. It was one he had always summoned when things became too much, too painful to handle alone, and such moments had only multiplied as he broke further and further, more and more brittle as time went by. Will smiled warmly at him as he obeyed, counting the seconds aloud for him, his blue eyes glittering in a dappled ray of sunlight dripping from the trees above.

He did not remember where they were or why, nor even if this scene had really happened, but it mattered little. This sight, the sight of Will smiling at him with love in his eyes, he would never give up, not for anything or anyone, with the exception of Will himself, in any capacity he could have him.

He had barely calmed himself down from his sudden onset of panic, tentatively taken his fingers out of his ears and uncurled himself from the tight, undignified, pathetic little ball he hadn't realised he had folded himself into, when a booming voice made him jerk into a corner of the wall and wish he had just fainted.

"Dr Lecter, my name is Jack Crawford, I was told you might not remember me."

"You work for the Community's Bureau of Investigation," retorted Hannibal. "I remember you, Mr Crawford, to a point. Will wanted to work for you." Crawford worked for the human FBI, which had naturally translated into him working for the CBI and made him the humans' law enforcement's contact into their Community. The Walkers and Watchers did not live separately, or hidden, from the humans, like they had centuries ago, but neither did they mingle in every capacity, hence the existence of CBIs as opposed to a subdivision of the human FBI. To integrate further into the human society, many Walkers and Watchers took a second, human job when not on active duty. Will had been of those who didn't, and simply

taught at the CBI Academy when not mobilised for Walker duty. Or had taught at the CBI seven years ago, at any rate.

“Good. Then what I’m here to tell you won’t be too much of a shock. You will be transferred to Will Graham’s residency in six days. We will install several trackers on you, so don’t even think about trying to run. There will be armed guards around the residency. If you resist or prove uncooperative, you will be sedated or beaten, and

I’m sure you can guess which the guards will prefer. Do I make myself clear ?”

Hannibal nodded and tentatively opened his eyes to show Crawford he was being honest. The voice hissed viciously at him for the show of submission, ending it in a mocking laugh.

“May I ask questions about my living conditions from next week on?”

“You’ll learn them soon enough,” said Crawford over his shoulder as he turned tail and left. Hannibal heroically resisted the urge to growl at his departing back, and settled for a furtive show of teeth before diving under the covers of his cot, dignity be damned, and doing his best to exist as a mindless burrito until he got to see Will again.

He shuddered to think what his mongoose must have eaten during his absence, and firmly ignored the voice in his head. It didn’t matter that Will hated him. Just being in his presence, seeing him exist, would be balm enough on the years he had lost and couldn’t remember.

Stranger

Chapter Summary

Hannibal goes home

Chapter Notes

so im sorry this is late, i kept trying to write more of it but got severe writer's block, so this is shorter than it should be. Next chapter should be there by the end of the fortnight? Also a big thank you to rusprince, whose small little comment made me smile and remember that oh shit, i forgot to post chapter 3!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal learned three things that day.

One, he was considered dangerous enough that it warranted restraints, blindfolds, earplugs, and even gags during his transfer. He had never been more grateful not to be prone to carsickness. Still, it was a little surprising, and a tiny bit concerning too that reprieve from the world and its searing lights and noises and hateful faces made him relax instead of panicking. His brain really was a mess. The roughing up was kept to a minimum, a bit of hair-tugging and shoving and a groping hand looking for something that didn't exist anymore on his chest. A nice walk in the park compared to... he couldn't remember.

Two, Will has a girlfriend of four years. A fiancée.

That came as a gut punch. He hadn't exactly expected Will to be waiting for him, especially considering his new ring and reaction to him the week before...

Why would he react otherwise? You hurt him, you hurt everyone when you—

I can't remember.

... but it still rankled. Hot flares of anger bloomed inside his belly, and he had to momentarily dig his nails into his palm and breathe through his nose to keep from pouncing on her and tearing her throat out with his teeth. She wasn’t the one at fault.

He did not summon Will’s voice to calm himself down.

Will's fiancée was a charming, if modestly born Watcher. She didn't give him her name—

Smart woman

—so he asked her if he could call her Hestia, goddess of the hearth. She seemed surprised, but granted him both a small smile and her permission. She was pretty in a simple way, with straight blonde hair and blue eyes and the healthy tan of a woman who spent as much time outside as she could given her circumstances. Perhaps not entirely worth searing his eyes with the natural light streaming through the tall gothic windows of the living room, but he did it anyways.

Three. Will and his fiancée lived in Hannibal's childhood home.

That, too, felt rather like a gut punch.

He hadn't been back since the attack back when he was ten. After reading the report of what had happened, he wasn't exactly anxious to.

Maybe that could be considered another thing he learned. Four, reading and seeing were two different things, even though twenty-two years had passed since the event. Seeing hurt in a way he had not expected and was not braced for. It was, perhaps, a good thing that his memory palace was in such a state of disrepair. Some things he could not, would not remember.

There was a splatter of Faerie blue blood on the wall of the main living room, hidden under a glamour as if it made it any less obvious. The smell made his stomach roil and his throat clench up, but he said nothing and simply resolved to avoid the room until he found a way to deal with it.

There was an unpleasant tingle in the air of the east corridor that no runework could mask.

According to the report, his older cousin had vaporised herself here, killing at least ten Fae warriors in the blast. He breathed in deeply, chasing the remnants of a smell that was once hers. Remarkable, that it had endured so long, even woven into the very fabric of the air as it was.

The door of the servant's quarters had been replaced. Hannibal wondered idly if the survivors still maintained the Manor.

The West staircase was no more. The West wing, in fact, had been entirely rebuilt, much to his consternation. His aunt and uncle, who had lived there with their own servants, would have hated the modern style and bright colours.

Weeds and unnatural plants had overgrown the court where his mother and father had made their last stand. There too, there was a weird tingle in the air. And a perfect, bare circle in the middle of the court.

Hannibal kept his eyes open longer than he had in... he couldn't remember. The magical vines on the walls barely covered slashes and holes, sooth and dried blood on the walls of the court. It was the only place that had not been touched. In fact, according to Hestia, no one could step into the court.

"It's as if there was a wall—" she began, before trailing off as Hannibal stepped outside, over vines and plants that existed nowhere else, raising an eyebrow at her.

"Except for you, apparently," she amended as her attempt to follow him was thwarted by said wall. Hannibal followed her back inside and closed his stinging eyes.

There was, of course, no sign of Mischa.

0o0o0o0o0

His room was as he'd left it. Down to the books crammed under the mattress for late-night reading, the knife he'd cherished hidden under the second floorboard from the bed - he'd used another one during his escape - the chocolate stash in the wall (were these still edible? It had been twenty-two years...) the hole in the wall near the window where the first arrow had embedded itself - the second had found a home in his shoulder - and the secret passage leading, well, everywhere and anywhere you wanted if you were a pure Lecter, with family marks on your magic given on your fifth birthday. Not that anyone else knew that.

As the current Lecter Head of Family, in fact, he should have been offered the Master bedroom, as he alone had complete control of all doors, passages and wards on the grounds, and he alone could monitor them from the enchanted mirror facing the bed, but he did not point it out.

Hestia left him there, telling him dinner was at seven thirty and that he was free to roam the house.

'Free to roam' his own family house. He barely stopped himself from grinding his teeth at the indignity. He would save the incivilities for days when he had less of a grasp on his own mind.

His first stop was the bathroom — his suite bathroom obviously, not the communal one in the hallway, that one was for guests and no matter what the current occupants of Lecter Manor might think, he was *not* a *guest* — where he lit some candles found, as expected, in the second drawer, and drew himself a bath, sinking into it without pausing to ask himself if he had any other clothes than his hospital-issued ones.

"I will cut some out of the curtains if I have to," he muttered rebelliously, in the water up to his chin. The voice in his head scoffed.

Great étiquette.

"This is my home. Everything belongs to me from curtains to dust motes."

It hasn't been your home for twenty-two years.

"The only reason these people have access to part of the Manor and grounds is because some wards recognise I made Will an honorary member of the family when we got engaged," snapped Hannibal to the empty bathroom, anger rising. "I could revoke it any time and leave them reeling outside the gates. It is my realm, my house, my -"

Are you ev*en really a Lecter anymore? Asked the voice curiously. Are you even fully a Walker anymore?*

Hannibal closed his mouth and sank under the water.

It burned his eyes in a way that he supposed almost felt like crying.

(Another thing he learned that day is that if you scream of rage and sorrow underwater, no one hears you but the voices in your head.)

0o0o0o0o0

The voice returned as Hannibal was drying off in front of the mirror, ostensibly not avoiding his reflection but managing not to catch his own eyes all the same. He was pale as a ghost, and his hair was a peculiar colour —

What are you afraid of? Look in the mirror.

His scarred, broken hand wiped the steam off the glass without his conscious input. He met his eyes, his broken glass eyes, in the mirror. His reflection smirked with teeth sharp as thorns.

There , it said. *Now you can see me* . The eyes flickered black. The face grew older.

"I don't want to see you," Hannibal rasped out. "You're..."

What am I? Asked the reflection, raising its eyebrows with an innocent expression. *But yourself?*

His throat burned.

"No, you aren't," whispered his voice. It felt as if the words were physically scratching their way out. "You're a monster. Will hates you. The only good thing in your life hates you."

And why is that?

"I-I don't know."

Yes, you do. His reflection, this horrible, twisted man in the mirror, tutted patronisingly.

"No I don't! I-I-I know that you've hurt him and hurt everyone and -" his vision blurred. Of all the moments for the tears to flow, it had to be during one of his hateful stand-offs with himself. Pathetic.

His reflection hissed as much.

You used to be powerful, Hannibal, you used to be feared -

"I never asked for *his* fear!"

- And respected. You could get that back, you could become -

"A MONSTER WHO HURTS EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE HE HAS LEFT!"

The scream tore his way out of his chest and he desperately tugged on his hair. Maybe he could pretend the pain was the source of his tears. His reflection was quiet a moment.

It would stop hurting if you just allowed yourself to remember.

"No," hissed Hannibal, gripping the edge of the sink hard enough for his knuckles to whiten and cramp. His vision swam and tears splashed his hands. "No, you're a liar. It always hurt, i*t always hurts*, and my only consolation is that I don't have to be you anymore."

The reflection flashed it's dark eyes and pointy teeth for a second before Hannibal's right fist shattered the glass.

It hurt and burned and bled and hurt again, and Hannibal crumbled to the floor and hissed in rage, clutching his injured hand to his chest as if that was the thing that hurt the most.

"I can't remember," he growled between his tears. "I can't remember, I won't remember, I can't ."

The voice was silent.

It wouldn't last.

It never lasted.

0o0o0o0o0

Will didn't see Hannibal until dinner. He'd been avoiding him by going to a work he was excused from until the Hannibal Lecter Mission was completed. Oberon, Lord of Unseelie, the awkwardness was going to kill him. He had to mentally prepare for at least a couple of weeks spent in the company of the two loves of his life, one of which was an amnesic criminal with Faerie Madness on top of, well, the thing that had made him a dangerous lunatic in the first place.

So when he slipped in on the evening to find his ex-fiancé and his future wife chatting at the dinner table, his surprise was minimal, in direct contrast with his unrest. Molly was a good conversationalist, quick, witty and clever. So was Hannibal, in his stuffy, pompous way. He had a type. His surprise simply came from the fact that absolutely no one in their right mind would have spoken to Hannibal Lecter now. Will himself wasn't sure he'd - no, he wouldn't speak to Hannibal, because this Hannibal claimed not to remember anything and if Will got caught in that lie...

"Come on," Molly was saying, amused. "Tell a lie. You're not in Faerie anymore, no thing's gonna happen to you."

Hannibal sighed before getting out :

"The sky is yell- Ack!"

He seemed for a second to choke on the words, spitting and spluttering into a handkerchief. He made a face and showed it to Molly indignantly.

"Cruel woman," he gasped. "Look how you make me bleed!"

"Oh stars." Molly's face fell. "I didn't think it actually hurt you."

Hannibal shrugged and folded the handkerchief. He had donned a pair of sunglasses despite the room being already pretty dark. Their heavy round shape almost looked comical perched atop his cheekbones.

"How can I make it up to you?" Asked Molly, and Will nearly swallowed his tongue. One did not just fucking ask an allegedly amnesic crazed lunatic that kind of questions. Especially if said crazed lunatic was Hannibal. Despite the large hipster sunglasses hiding his eyes and eyebrows from sight, the half-Fae recognised the quicksilver expression of mischief crossing his ex's face and butted in before he could say anything.

"Glad to see you're charming my future wife, Hannibal," he said dryly as he bent to kiss her. The young man looked away as she hummed into it, and Will's mood was instantly lifted.

"Oh, I think she's charming me," retorted Hannibal lightly. "Hestia is just the most wonderful host - or is it guest? I get confused. After all, you are living in my house."

There was a tense silence before Hannibal turned fully to Will and smiled.

"How was your day, Will? You are working at the CBI, correct, I didn't hallucinate that part of your life?"

"Do you really not remember anything?" asked Will instead of answering. He couldn't do that. That type of small talk made it seem like -

Like they were still engaged. Like the past seven years had truly been erased and they still knew each other inside out, still...

Hannibal shrugged and put his chin on one bandaged hand. The visible parts of his fingers and wrist were criss-crossed in white scars that Will didn't remember seeing five years ago. Faerie Madness scars.

"I remember pain," said Hannibal nonchalantly. "I remember being constantly cold and scared, and an ever-mounting sense of panic." His voice didn’t shake, but he paused a second before continuing, lower :

"I remember I had something - something to tell you. I remember muttering to myself 'I have to tell Will, I must remember, I have to remember to tell him...' but whatever it was, I forgot."

The silence fell again.

"Do you know where your scars come from?" ventured Will, desperate for something. He remembered Hannibal telling him about the white scars years ago, something about the infected of Faerie Madness not remembering, noticing, or wanting to talk about the scars, but...

"Well," sighed Hannibal in a light but tight tone. "I assume they came from Faerie. Although some of them come from my nasty habit of smashing mirrors, others were probably made with a knife."

"Not very specific."

"I personally find it to be quite a specific way of saying I can’t remember, Will."

Seeing the half-Fae open his mouth anew, Hannibal rocked back in his chair with a frustrated growl, before smacking the surface of the table with his open palms. Will flinched hard.

"Listen to me, you stubborn boy, and listen well, because I have been saying this on every tone and in every way I can for the past week and a half: I. Cannot. Remember. I do not have a single clear memory of the past seven years or so that I care to recall. My last clear memory is" his voice caught. "officially engaging myself to you, no offense to your *future wife* ."

In the silence that followed his declaration, he passed a hand on his face, pushing up the sunglasses and scrunching his eyes shut before Will could really see how red they were. He took a deep breath before continuing:

"If all you are going to do is interrogate me, I might as well have stayed in my cell under the Chancellery."

"You're not exactly here on vacation, Hannibal," retorted Will. "You're still..."

"A dangerous monster that a lot of people would rather see dead than alive," Hannibal's tone was so bitter it could have made flowers wilt, a shocking display of emotion even after his outburst. Even twenty-five year old Hannibal Lecter had, in Will’s memory, been more collected. "So I gathered, yes."

This time, Will *could* fight the flinch, if only out of sheer determination. He could see Molly eyeing them both as one might eye two tigers circling each other. Hannibal's face was angled

towards the table, jaw set, shoulders curled as if expecting a blow. He looked small and vulnerable, and in a flash Will realised that he held in his hands, on the tip of his tongue, the means to break Hannibal Lecter... Or at least this version of him.

He wondered what that might look like.

Then he wondered how Molly would look at him if he proved to be that cruel. How Hannibal, his version of Hannibal, buried in his head and close to his heart, would look at him if he did that.

Another version of Hannibal he never wanted to see again leaned a shoulder against an imaginary doorway and asked him *What would you do with the power to-*

He crushed the thought. It did not bear considering, it did not. He would not turn into that kind of man. Not from hatred, not from fear not from a sense of revenge against someone who would barely know what he was revenging against. Not from the jumbled, painful feelings the sight of Hannibal awakened in him.

Will did not realise he was still standing staring at Hannibal until the staff doors opened and the young man turned his head, metallic hair gleaming under the dim light. He quickly snatched his gaze away, too late. Molly was looking at him, carefully blank-faced as he sat down in front of her.

Dinner, unsurprisingly, was tense. At the head of the table, Hannibal kept his head down and just short of wolfed down the food put in front of him like he'd never tasted anything better, while Will and Molly made awkward small-talk that didn't involve any names or mentions of current events. It had been agreed that keeping twenty-five-years-old Hannibal in the dark about the state of the world was for the best, as much as was possible.

It felt weird eating a meal with Hannibal that the man hadn’t prepared himself. Will couldn’t help but think the excellent food of the Lecter Manor staff tasted a bit blander than it should.

When dessert was brought out, Molly tried to cajole Hannibal back into a conversation about - Will's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets - magic-induced mental illnesses.

"So, Dr Lecter, I read your paper on Dissociative Identity Disorder and possession, and I was hoping you could tell me a bit more about it..."

"Ah, well." Hannibal crossed his fingers on the table. "That article definitely wasn't my best, and considering I am not a doctor yet by any recollection of mine, I suppose that is truly saying something. I made the matter seem entirely too complicated. The fact is, any form of possession might induce or worsen dissociative episodes and make it look like DID, but unlike DID, possession is felt by the body and mind to be a foreign intrusion and therefore the body of the possessed works tirelessly to reject the intrusion, sometimes leading to brain and body damage. The difference is that -"

"- Every body and consciousness gives off specific magical signatures, even if the individual is magicless. These signatures are recognised by other bodies and consciousnesses and therefore several identities split from one will have similar magical signatures that will not

register as fundamentally foreign, while possession will bring with it a strong magical signature that may be completely different from the body's, leading to a strong internal reaction against it," continued Will without thinking about it. "Oberon," he feigned not to see Hannibal flinch "I could quote that follow up article in my sleep at this point."

Hannibal closed his mouth, doubtlessly staring behind the sunglasses. When he spoke, his voice was carefully scrubbed of all emotion.

"Was I quoting the follow up article?"

"Paraphrasing." Will still didn't look at him.

"I - well. That is certainly interesting. I know things that I don't remember having learned."

If this had been a movie, Will thought while carefully not freezing up and panicking, there would have been an ominous music playing just at that moment.

If Hannibal could remember all he'd learned before disappearing, they were all in danger.

Chapter End Notes

next up, some explanations about Walking and possibly a heart-to-heart. Please gimme kudos and comments?

End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Constructive criticism? I'd like to hear it all. Send it my way, folks.

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